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General Assembly

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Committee on Conferences
Organizational session for 2002

Annotated provisional agenda for the organizational session for 2002

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2002.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organization of work for 2002.
4. Programme of work for 2002.
5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2002.
6. Other business.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2002

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that thenceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

3. Organization of work for 2002

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even-numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

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At its organizational session for 2001, on 19 April 2001, the Committee adopted its agenda for 2001 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2002 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2002.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly are to be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 2002

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988.

Annexed to the present document is a draft agenda for the substantive session of 2002, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2002

6. Other business

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

Annex

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 2002

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   - (a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2003;
   - (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:
     - (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;
     - (ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;
     - (iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;
     - (iv) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;
     - (v) Improved coordination and utilization of conference services;
   - (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243.
3. Documentation and publication-related matters:
   - (a) Submission of documentation;
   - (b) Distribution of documentation;
   - (c) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits.
4. Translation and interpretation-related matters:
   - (a) Use of remote interpretation;
   - (b) Utilization of new technologies;
   - (c) Language services posts;
     - (i) Temporary assistance posts;
     - (ii) Employment of retirees;
     - (iii) Employment of interpreters with desired language combinations.
5. Information technology.
6. Organization of work.
7. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2003

A draft revised calendar for 2003 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2002.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2003.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

The Committee has studied annually a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested that Nairobi be included in all analytical tables for future reports when data for the three-year period was available. It also requested that the organs be listed in the order of their utilization factors and that the utilization factors for a three-year period be provided in the report so that trends in the utilization factors of various bodies could be easily identified.

In compliance with the foregoing requests, the Secretariat will report to the Committee at its substantive session of 2002 on meeting statistics of United Nations organs.

(ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

At its substantive session of 2001, the Committee requested its Chairperson to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. In section II, paragraph 16, of its resolution 56/242 of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Committee to consult with those bodies that consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

An oral report will be presented on the matter.

(iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In section II, paragraph 18, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 2002-2003 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groups, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the implementation of that decision. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee had requested the Secretariat to include in future reports a breakdown on requests by regional groups.

The Secretariat will report to the Committee in compliance with the above requests. The period covered by the report will be from July 2001 to April 2002 in order to ensure timely issuance of the report in compliance with the six-week rule.

(iv) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In section II, paragraph 11, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly urged all subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Human Settlements, and encouraged Member States, intergovernmental bodies and regional and other major groupings, to increase their use of the conference facilities at Nairobi. In paragraph 12, the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to assist the aforementioned bodies in improving this situation and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences, on the actions taken to that end.

A report will be submitted in compliance with the above request.

(v) Improved coordination and utilization of conference services

In accordance with past practice, the Secretariat will report orally on relevant issues and developments concerning the coordination and utilization of conference-servicing resources.

In section II, paragraph 6, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the mechanisms available for addressing the concerns of Member States about the efficiency, quality and delivery of conference services, including information about the way in which the concerns of Member States are recorded and reported, and on the grouping of these issues in reports to the Assembly.

The Secretariat will report in compliance with the above requests.

In paragraph 84 of its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001 on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a report on the working methods, functions and productivity standards, and on the quality and quantity of those functions of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and on the backstopping functions within the Secretariat, bearing in mind the need to make proposals for the efficient use of resources and to consider the best way to fulfil its mandates.

The Secretariat will report to the Committee in compliance with the above requests in the context of the overview report on the functioning of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, in which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences.

A conference room paper on the requests received in this regard will be prepared by the Secretariat for consideration by the Committee.

3. Documentation and publication-related matters

(a) Submission of documentation

In section III, paragraph 10, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly decided to approve the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken by the Secretariat to strengthen responsibility and accountability in the submission of documentation (A/56/300), and requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on measures taken to ensure full implementation of the report. Furthermore, in paragraph 11, it requested the Secretary-General to develop an effective accountability and responsibility system within the Secretariat in order to ensure timely submission of documents for processing and to report thereon, through the Committee on Conferences, to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

The Secretariat will report in compliance with the above requests.

(b) Distribution of documentation

In section III, paragraph 3, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly deeply regretted the failure of author departments to abide by section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000 and, in that regard, requested the Secretary-General to take corrective measures to ensure the full implementation of that provision and to report to the Assembly in the first part of its fifty-sixth session.

The report contained in document A/C.5/56/37 has been issued in compliance with the above request.

(c) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits

At its 1998 substantive session, the Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it should stress once again the need for compliance with the existing

page limits. The Committee again invited all intergovernmental bodies to consider, where appropriate, the possibility of further reducing the length of their reports from 32 to 20 pages. It also called on the Secretariat to make its procedures for obtaining waivers to the 16-page rule more rigorous, maintaining however the necessary degree of flexibility, with a view to encouraging author departments to reduce the length of their submissions while maintaining high standards of quality. In addition, the Committee requested the Secretariat to submit to it, every two years, updated information on the number and length of documents.

In paragraphs 15 and 16 of its resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly endorsed the above recommendations of the Committee, and, in paragraph 17, requested the Secretariat to submit to the Committee, every two years, updated information on the number and length of documents.

The Secretariat will report to the Committee on the subject.

4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters

(a) Use of remote interpretation

At its substantive session of 2001, the Committee expressed support for the intention of the Secretariat to foster the accumulation of experience among interpreters working on-site at meetings that had some of the characteristics of remote meetings, namely, a videoconference component, so as to facilitate the process of adaptation to a new working environment. It also requested the Secretariat to assess future advances in the videoconferencing and communications areas to determine whether they could offer solutions to the outstanding technical problems of remote interpretation. It noted, however, that the Secretariat did not currently foresee conducting further experiments. In section IV, paragraph 1, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly requested that no further pilot projects on remote interpretation be conducted until technological developments so warranted.

The Committee requested that a report on developments in those areas, as well as any activities in the field of remote interpretation carried out by other international organizations, be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session through the Committee on Conferences.

In paragraph 13 of its report (A/56/475) the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions also requested that a progress report on the subject be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

Furthermore, in section IV, paragraph 2, of its resolution 56/242, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive comparative cost-benefit analysis on the use of remote interpretation at all United Nations duty stations, as recipients and as providers of that service, covering, inter alia, direct and indirect related costs and utilization rates, as well as issues pertaining to the working conditions of interpreters.

A report will be submitted in compliance with the above requests.

(b) Utilization of new technologies

In section IV, paragraph 5, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly decided to conduct a comprehensive review of the current norms and standards of productivity

in the language services and the impact of ongoing technological innovations on their work and requested the Secretary-General to present a detailed report on the subject to the Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences, at its fifty-seventh session.

The Secretariat will accordingly submit a report.

(c) Language services posts

(i) Temporary assistance posts

In paragraph 83 of its resolution 56/253, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its resumed fifty-sixth session, or no later than its fifty-seventh session, through the relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, specific proposals for the conversion of some of the temporary assistance posts requested in section 2 into established posts wherever that would measurably lead to higher efficiency and better quality of services.

The Committee will be informed of developments in this field.

(ii) Employment of retirees

In section IV, paragraph 4, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide updated information to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, under the agenda item entitled "Human resources management", on current practices related to the special ceiling on the United Nations annual earnings for United Nations retirees employed on a short-term basis in language services, as established by the Assembly in its decision 51/408 of 4 November 1996, with a view to reviewing this issue.

A report will be submitted to the Committee for information.

(iii) Employment of interpreters with desired language combinations

In section IV, paragraph 3, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly decided to approve, for an initial period of one year, the training initiative for interpreters who, on the first competitive examination, scored higher than the benchmark of 55 per cent and who possess those language combinations that are insufficiently represented on the roster of successful candidates, subject to the submission to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session of information on the results of the training activities, the continuing need for the programme and related financial arrangements.

The Secretariat will report on the subject.

5. Information technology

In section V, paragraph 1, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a progress report on the use of information technology in the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, specifying the impact of new technologies on the working methods and productivity of the personnel of the Department.

The Secretariat will report on the subject.

6. Organization of work

In section II, paragraph 5, of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly welcomed the improved participation of observers in the work of the Committee on Conferences, the changes in the procedure governing the participation of observers and the decision of the Committee to keep this procedure under review.

7. Adoption of the report